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ADDRESS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE

DEMOCRATIC

State Committee

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Democratic Party

PHILADELPHIA:
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ADDRESS

OF THE

Democratic State Committee.

TO THE CITIZENS OF PENNSYLVANIA :

It has been usual for the State Committee, representing the Democratic party of Pennsylvania, to address the people of the State pending important elections. In conformity with this usage, which may be regarded as settled and salutary, we submit the following address :

The Democratic State Convention, upon the second day of March last, and at its re-assembling in June, made nominations for the offices of Governor, Canal Commissioner and Judge of the Supreme Court.

For Governor, GEN. PACKER, of Lycoming was named, after a spirited contest, and his nomination was then unanimously and rightfully confirmed. He has been long well known throughout the State, has filled a number of responsible and important positions in the State government, and has established a public character which strongly recommends him to popular confidence. We conceive it to be a material qualification for this high office, that the incumbent shall be well acquainted with the practical workings of the government—with the course and character of legislation—the details of business in the several executive departments—and with the public men of the Commonwealth, who have filled, or may fill, the various positions created by the Constitution and laws. The contrast, in this respect, between our candidate and the candidates of the opposition, is too strongly marked to escape general notice, and it is but necessary to allude to it to show the vantage ground held by our party

in the present contest. It may be asserted that the Convention have named "the right man for the right place," and that their nomination deserves popular endorsement, if regard is had to qualifications and experience.

It is agreeable to add, that our candidate has a solid and reputable character in private life, and that his estimable qualities have endeared him to a large circle of friends who can enter upon his support with feelings of enthusiasm as well as with convictions of duty.

We do not desire to draw strongly the contrast which it is possible to draw, between our candidate and his leading opponent. Judge Wilmot has had a career as a public man which has given him notoriety without inspiring confidence.—Imperfectly acquainted with the practical action of the State government; without experience in its legislative or executive departments; with but a limited knowledge of public men and State affairs beyond his immediate locality—he is presented upon a comparatively remote national issue, and as the candidate of a bitter sectional party which received a merited defeat at the recent Presidential election. It is not believed that his career in Congress exhibited any high capacity to promote the interests of the people of Pennsylvania, and it is certain that his recent course in the office he now holds, has been calculated to lower the judicial character by connecting it with extreme and violent partisan disputes.

Nimrod Strickland, of Chester county, was named by the Convention for Canal Commissioner. He needs no recommendation at our hands, for his integrity, firmness and capacity are not disputed and are widely recognized. It will be a pleasure for those who belong to our party, and for all who desire to consult fitness and merit in bestowing their suffrages, to give him their cordial support.

By reason of the declination by Chief Justice Lewis, of the re-nomination tendered him by the Convention, and the calling of Judge Black to the post of Attorney General in the National Administration, the Convention, upon its re-assembling in June, found the duty devolved upon it of naming two candidates for the Supreme Bench. Wm. Strong of Berks county, a distinguished member of the bar, and formerly a member of Congress, and James Thompson of Erie, also a former member of Congress, once a President Judge of the Common Pleas, an ex-Member of the Legislature, and a profound and successful lawyer, were selected by the Convention. Their locations are suitable, giving both to the East and West a representation upon the ticket, and their learning and integrity well qualify them to discharge the arduous and responsible duties of the highest judicial position under our Constitution.

Such is the ticket formed by the delegates representing the Democratic party, and support of it is confidently asked in view of the character of the nominations. But confidence and support are also invited upon the general grounds of policy and principle upon which our party stand. Ours is no new, untried, vindictive, sectional or suspicious organization. It has been tried; it is bold and open in conduct; it is magnanimous, patriotic and national. Founded more than half a century ago by the author of the Declaration of Independence, it has had a distinguished history, has ordinarily given direction to the administration of public affairs, and planting itself early, and throughout its whole career, upon a strict construction of the Constitution, and a sparing use of the powers of Government, has preserved our American system from degeneracy and failure.

The usefulness of organized parties is sometimes denied, and oftener doubted:—But in view of historical facts it cannot well be questioned that they are incident to free governments, and arise of necessity under their operation. An inquiry, however, into the nature of political parties and the causes which produce them, can scarcely be expected to constitute the subject of a fugitive address. It will be sufficient for present purposes to assert the necessity of our party to check the evil and dangerous influences to which our political system is liable, and against which it is impossible that written constitutions can sufficiently guard. Doubtless our constitutions exhibit the wisdom of those who framed them, and the amendments to which they have been subjected have rendered them more complete and perfect than they were at first. But a constitution can only be an outline for the action of government, (besides providing for its establishment,) and by *construction* it may be made to mean almost anything the political authorities for the time being may choose. It is a chart given to direct the vessel of state which can have little effect upon the voyage unless those in command choose to faithfully interpret and observe its counsel. A party organization, therefore, founded upon right principles of constitutional construction and powerfully and constantly influencing official action, may be regarded as necessary. It is, in short, absolutely required to give a just and consistent direction to government, both in cases dependent upon construction of the constitution and in cases where the constitution is silent. Besides the instability of political action in republics is a reproach to which they have been often subjected, and is the objection to them which has had greatest weight with profound and independent thinkers both in the old world and the new. But this instability, which arises principally from individual ambition, the selfishness of classes, and the fluctuations of opinion, is to a

great extent checked and prevented by the predominance of a party founded upon clear and sound principles of public policy, and acting constantly with reference to them.

Now, the Democratic party is simply the representative of a school of opinion, and its creed is given it by those who founded and have subsequently supported it. The great men who have spoken and acted for it, and whose names will remain prominent upon the history of the country, have been men of strong, clear and sound views of our system of government, and of the rules upon which its administration should proceed. Our party is the product of their efforts; the instrument for accomplishing the ends they proposed, and it remains a monument of their sagacity, foresight and patriotism.

They held that over-action in government was a great evil—the most difficult to be guarded against, and therefore the most dangerous—and that both within and without the Constitution powerful guards against it were required. Proverbial language conveys the idea in declaring that “the world is governed too much,” and that “that government is best which governs least;” and philosophical reasoning attains the same result, in concluding, that government being the creature of necessity, is limited, by the necessities which create it, and is not to be extended beyond them. The Democratic party has therefore held, and holds, that Constitutions shall receive a strict construction; that government shall exercise no powers not clearly delegated to it, and that in cases of doubt as to the policy of a particular measure, the conclusion shall be against it. In short, that public power shall not be exerted, except where a clear warrant and manifest utility authorize and justify it.

The powerful (and we think salutary) operation of this doctrine appears throughout the history of the National and State governments, and the occasional departures from it stand as beacons to warn, and not as examples to follow.

To illustrate our remarks, we will refer briefly to a number of measures of public policy heretofore proposed to the general or state Governments, upon which divisions of opinion have existed among public men and parties. They will afford data for judging the value of the Democratic doctrine on the subject of Government powers and policy, of which we have spoken.

First—A Bank, created by the General Government, owned in part by it, and intended for the regulation of the currency, and to afford facilities to commerce and business. This measure was resisted, and all recent attempts to re-establish such an institution have been put down, upon the very ground above stated.

Second—Internal Improvements, to be constructed at the charge of the national treasury, to facilitate internal trade and

assist in developing the material resources of particular sections. No clear authority for outlays of this description appearing, and the manifest dangers to which they lead being apparent, the action of the Federal Government on this subject has been rightfully and wisely arrested.

Third—Excessive duties upon imports, to the extent of prohibition upon their importation, or to the production of revenue beyond the legitimate wants of government. The federal power of imposing duties being for the expressed object of Government support and the liquidation of public indebtedness, its exercise for an entirely different object would seem unwarranted, and would be unjust to interests or individuals against whom a discrimination is thus produced. Therefore it is, that against much misconception and the opposition of powerful interests, the doctrine of limited and reasonable duties has been sternly, and upon the whole, successfully upheld.

Fourth—The distribution of moneys from the national treasury among the States, believed to be equally unwarranted with the preceding measures, and inevitably tending to the production of speculation and extravagance in the States, has also been resisted, and except upon a single occasion, prevented.

Fifth—A bankrupt act, dissolving the relation of debtor and creditor in a manner and to an extent unauthorized by the Constitution, disastrous to private rights, injurious to morals, and to the encouragement, mainly, of one of the least meritorious classes of society—the speculator and spendthrift. With hot haste and under the lash of public opinion, the very authors of such an act in 1842 were coerced into its repeal.

Sixth—Appropriations of public money or lands, to objects of doubtful constitutionality or utility; connected with which, may be mentioned the allowance of claims, insufficiently established or unjust. The Democratic principle strikes as decisively at all projects for assailing the treasury, for an individual, a class, or a section, in the absence of clear right to justify the demand, as it does at other unwarranted or doubtful measures.

Seventh—The exercise of jurisdiction by the General Government over slavery in the territories, to the exclusion of local decision thereon. Legislation by Congress upon slavery beyond the express requirement as to return of fugitives, is to be doubted, and if regard is had to high judicial opinion, expressly denied, as a valid exercise of power. And its inexpediency is most plainly manifest, in view of the dangerous disputes which such action inevitably produces. Most clearly, therefore, is it to be deprecated and opposed, upon the general doctrine of non action by government in doubtful cases.

Eighth—The establishment of corporations, either excessive as to number, or vested with inordinate powers and privileges;

and especially for pursuits or business within the reach of individual means and skill. Under which head is to be particularly noted, the chartering of banks beyond the business wants of the community, locating them at points without adequate commerce or exchanges to afford legitimate occupation, and failing to impose upon them such guards against abuse and fraud as are demanded by experience. The recent resolution on this subject by our State Convention, but indicates the well considered position of our party on this subject and its policy for the future.

Ninth—The authorizing of municipal subscriptions to rail-roads and other corporate bodies, to the encouragement of speculation, corruption and the accumulation of public debts. The proposition now before the people for the amendment of the Constitution to prevent this in future, is but in affirmance of the principle we have been considering; for the decision of a divided Court in favor of legislative power to authorize such subscriptions has not removed all doubts, and has left the powerful objections to the system upon grounds of expediency, untouched and irresistible.

Tenth—The sale or surrender by Government, in whole or in part, of any of its constitutional powers confided to it by the people. The attempt to do this in the late act for the sale of the Main Line of the Public Works; an attempt which was denounced by the State Convention, and has since been pronounced unconstitutional by the Supreme Court; may be cited under this head, and deserved that reprobation which it has generally received.

Eleventh—Sumptuary laws, by which dress, food, drink, equipage, or other like concern of use, habit or fashion, is coerced. The interference of law in such cases would seem to be unuseful, and is of doubtful authority.

Twelfth—Finally, measures directed against a class or sect and intended to degrade them or limit their civil privileges.—It is affirmed that neither religious belief nor birth-place will furnish grounds for ostracism or a denial of common right.

Such are some of the leading measures upon which political divisions have taken place, and on their careful examination it will be seen that they can all be resolved into the general question whether the powers and action of government shall be extensive or limited. And if we should pursue the subject further, this view of the fundamental ground of difference between public men and parties would be but confirmed and strengthened.

We are left then to choose sides in the struggle between power and liberty—between a government that meddles and one that abstains—between political New Englandism and the Virginia doctrines of 1798. Neutrality is not possible, for almost every public question that arises compels us to a choice between

contending parties, and the schools of opinion which they respectively represent.

It has been fashionable for apostates from our party to claim that they retained their principles unchanged, and even opposing parties occasionally advance pretensions to the faith and doctrines of Jefferson. How unfounded such pretensions are, whether advanced by apostate or party, will appear from considering the measures of public policy they propose and support. If we find them favoring new projects of doubtful right or expediency; contending for extensive jurisdiction to government, and scoffing at constitutional scruples as "abstractions," we may be sure they are no disciples of the philanthropist, philosopher and statesman who founded our party, and who wrote to Edward Livingston as late as 1824, to endorse the sentiment, that "if we have a doubt relative to any power, we ought not to exercise it." Much more may we deny their discipleship, if we find their measures connected with intolerance in religion, proscription of adopted citizens, or aggressions upon territorial or state rights; which is manifestly a true description, at this moment, of the parties opposed to us.

The (so-called) Republican party makes high pretensions and challenges their examination; but there can be little difficulty in determining their character and value, and assigning the party which holds them its true position before the public.—Especially will it be a work of ease, to explode its pretension to sound opinions as held by former Republican Presidents, and to bring it within the condemnation which they directed against the heretical movements of the times in which they lived.

The resistance made about 1820, to the admission of Missouri into the Union, was similar to the recent conduct of those who misdescribe themselves as Republicans. In both cases the proposition was, that Congress should prohibit slavery in territories (or cause it to be prohibited) prior to their admission as States. The argument against this was stated by Mr. Madison, in the Walsh letter, under all the high sanctions which his abilities and his position as the leading author of the Constitution, could confer upon it. And it is as well established as any historical fact can be, that Mr. Jefferson was opposed to the Missouri agitation throughout, and to prohibitions of slavery by Congressional coercion as then proposed. His celebrated letter to John Holmes, dated 22d April, 1820, furnishes conclusive proof of this, and confirmation of the fact will be found in other parts of his published correspondence. In his letter to John Adams of December 10, 1819, he says: that, "from the battle of Bunker Hill to the treaty of Paris, we never had so ominous a question; it even damps the joy with which I hear of your high health and welcomes to me the consequences of my

want of it. I thank God, I shall not live to witness its issue." In a letter to the same, January 22d, 1821, he says—"what does the Holy Alliance in and out of Congress intend to do with us on the Missouri question? And this, by the way, is but the name of the case: it is only the John Doe or Richard Roe of the ejection. The real question, as seen in the States afflicted with this unfortunate population, is, 'are our slaves to be presented with freedom and a dagger?'" He says to Mr. Monroe, March 3, 1820—"the Missouri Question is the most portentous one which ever yet threatened our Union. In the gloomiest moment of the Revolutionary war, I never had any apprehension equal to that which I felt from this source." To Mr. Short, April 13, 1820—he writes—"Although I had laid down as law to myself never to write, talk, or even think of politics; to know nothing of public affairs; and had, therefore, ceased to read newspapers; yet the Missouri question aroused and filled me with alarm. The old scism of Federal and Republican threatened nothing because it existed in every State, and united them together by the fraternism of party. But the coincidence of a marked principle, moral and political, with a geographical line, once conceived, I feared would never more be obliterated from the mind; that it would be recurring on every occasion, and renewing irritations, until it would kindle such mutual and mortal hatred as to render separation preferable to eternal discord." He says to Joseph C. Cabell, January 31, 1821—"How many of our youths, *she* (Harvard College) now has *learning the lessons of Anti-Missouriism*, I know not; but a gentleman lately from Princeton told me he saw there the list of the students at that place, and that more than half were Virginians. *These will return home no doubt deeply impressed with the sacred principles of our Holy Alliance of Restrictionists!*" And to Gen. Breckinridge he writes, February 15, 1821: "The line of division lately marked out between different portions of our confederacy is such as will never, I fear, be obliterated; and we are now trusting to those *who are against us in position and principle*, to fashion to their own form the minds and affections of our youth. If, as has been estimated, we send three hundred thousand dollars a year to the northern seminaries for the instruction of our own sons, then we must have there five hundred of our sons *imbibing opinions and principles in discord with those of their own country*. This canker is eating on the vitals of our existence, and, if not arrested at once, will be beyond remedy." In a letter to Mr. Madison, in reference to the Missouri question, he declared that Rufus King (a distinguished federalist) was "*ready to risk the Union for any chance of restoring his party to power, and wriggling himself to the head*"

of it." On another occasion, he declared the question to be a mere party trick, "that the leaders of federalism defeated in their schemes of obtaining power * * have changed their tact and thrown out another barrel to the whale. They are taking advantage of the virtuous feeling of the people against slavery *to effect a division of parties by a geographical line, expecting that this will insure them, upon local principles, the majority they could never obtain on principles of federalism.*" And, finally, his letter to Gen. La Fayette, dated November 4, 1823, contains his judgment of the whole movement, expressed with his usual directness and vigor. He says—"The Hartford Convention, the victory of Orleans, the peace of Ghent, prostrated the name of federalism. Its votaries abandoned it through shame and mortification, AND NOW CALL THEMSELVES REPUBLICANS. *But the name alone is changed, the principles are the same.*" * * "On the eclipse of federalism with us, though not its extinction, *its leaders got up the Missouri question, under the false front of lessening the measure of slavery, BUT WITH THE REAL VIEW OF PRODUCING A GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION OF PARTIES, WHICH MIGHT INSURE THEM THE NEXT PRESIDENT.* The people of the North went blindfold into the snare, followed their leaders for a while with a zeal truly moral and laudable, *until they became sensible that they were injuring instead of aiding the real interests of the slaves, THAT THEY HAD BEEN USED MERELY AS TOOLS FOR ELECTIONEERING PURPOSES; AND THAT TRICK OF HYPOCRISY then fell as quickly as it had been got up.*"

This is an admirable description of the Republican party of the present day—of the causes which led to it, and the objects of its founders. The picture is drawn by the hand of a master, and represents the features of the subject with fidelity and exactness. Republicanism, being but a reproduction of Missouri agitation, bears precisely the same description, and is obnoxious to precisely the same censure.—And it is to be remarked, that like its predecessor, it invokes the legislation of Congress in a case of rank inexpediency and doubtful power, and hence falls within the condemnation of the general principle as to limited action by Government, which has been a topic of this address.

But a view of modern Republicanism would be incomplete without some particular notice of the features of its career. Without tracing its early movements in the organization of Abolition societies, the circulation of incendiary matter through the mails, agitation by petitions to Congress, clamorous opposition to the annexation of Texas, to the prosecution of the Mexican war and the acquisition of territory to which it led, it will be sufficient to notice somewhat the Wilmot Proviso which

preceded, and the Kansas dispute which accompanied, the organization of the Republican party in its present form.

The Wilmot Proviso was offered in Congress in 1846, as an amendment to a war bill, and was (briefly described) a proposition to prohibit slavery in Mexican territory to be acquired. It created contention which continued some four years. The national harmony was disturbed and the public business impeded by it, until it became necessary for patriotic men, in Congress and out of it, to unite their utmost efforts to restore peace and secure such legislation as was absolutely necessary for the territory in question. The Compromise Measures were therefore passed in 1850, and eventually received the general approval of the people. In fact, in 1852, both the great parties of the country endorsed them in their platforms, and their wisdom and propriety are not now a subject of general dispute.

The Territory we acquired from Mexico by the treaty of peace—the treaty of Gaudaloupe Hidalgo—comprised nearly the whole now included in the State of California and the Territories of Utah and New Mexico; and the Proviso, if it had been adopted, would therefore have had application solely to them. But was never adopted or applied by Congress to either. California was admitted into the union as a State with the Constitution she formed for herself, without any decision by Congress on the subject of slavery within her limits. That was adjusted by herself in her Constitution, and by her own act therefore she entered the Union as a free State. In the acts for the organization of Utah and New Mexico as Territories, there were no provisions prohibiting or authorizing slavery, but it was expressly provided that they should eventually come into the Union with or without slavery, as the people of each should decide in forming Constitutions preparatory to admission. Seven years have elapsed since these Territorial acts were passed, and no complaint is heard against them, nor has slavery been established in either Territory. It is therefore *proved* that the Wilmot Proviso was wholly unnecessary to the exclusion of slavery, and that the agitation from 1846 to 1850 to secure its enactment, was a thing of arrant folly as well as of real evil.

There stand the facts! no longer to be perverted or denied, and they exhibit the Proviso agitation in its true character.—Not adopted, it is seen to have been unnecessary. Productive of great mischief to the country in the contention and alienation it caused, it was a mere abstraction, a thing neither practical nor useful.

A desperate attempt was made last year to carry the Presidential election upon a Kansas agitation, in which the same class of actors appeared that did in the Missouri agitation of 1820—men “ready to risk the Union for any chance” of establish-

ing their party, "and wriggling themselves to the head of it." But, a just judgment was pronounced upon these people and their project in the election of Mr. Buchanan, and they will soon be obliged to select some other topic upon which to disturb the public tranquility, and struggle for the attainment of power. Their spasmodic attempts to keep up excitement without any practical or useful object in view, but simply that they may thrive upon discord and passion, are even now received by the public with a feeling bordering very nearly upon contempt.

The American people are practical and sagacious. They will require some practical good to appear in any movement to which they are invited; and when due time has elapsed for reflection, they will try parties and party measures by the standard of principle and not of professions.

The Wilmot proviso was utterly extinguished by Webster on the 7th of March 1850, in the demonstration of its inutility, and was thenceforth delivered over to history as an imposture; and approval of the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, has been growing more and more general as its conformity to sound principles has been examined and established. That unnecessary things shall not be done, and that the citizens of each political division of the country shall determine their local institutions, are, in fact, propositions so reasonable and just that it is surprising they should ever have been questioned.

Three years ago the Democratic party of this State chose defeat before dishonor. It stood up for toleration and equal rights, against the passions and prejudices of the time, because constitutional and just principles demanded it. And now, with a new antagonist—the Republican party—it still stands in the path of duty, with its past course vindicated, and with the highest claims to public confidence and favor. While it is not insensible to ideas of progress and improvement, and will seek to apply those that are practical and just, its duty as a great conservative organization, to preserve the principles of the government and the institutions of the country from degeneracy, will not be neglected. In brief, if trusted it will be true, and from its administration of public affairs, the people will receive, as heretofore, the "peaceable fruits" of good government and honest rule.

C. R. BUCKALEW, *Chairman.*

JNO. N. HUTCHINSON, }
R. J. HALDEMAN, } *Secretaries.*

LETTER.

MR. JEFFERSON TO

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MONTICELLO, APRIL 22, 1820.

I thank you, dear sir, for the copy you have been so kind as to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. It is a perfect justification to them. I had for a long time ceased to read newspapers, or pay any attention to public affairs, confident that they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not far distant. But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper. I can say, with conscious truth, that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any *practicable* way. The cession of that kind of property (for so it is misnamed) is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought, if, in that way, a general emancipation and *expatriation* could be effected; and gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go.—Justice is in one scale, and self preservation in the other. Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one state to another would not make a slave of a single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier, and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burthen on a greater number of coadjutors. An abstinence too, from this act of power, would remove the jealousy excited by the undertaking of Congress to regulate the condition of the different descriptions of men composing a State. This certainly is the exclusive right of every State, which nothing in the Constitution has taken from them and given to the general government. Could Congress, for example, say that the non-freemen of Connecticut shall be freemen, or that they shall not emigrate into any other State?

I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be, that I live not to weep over it. If they would but dispassionately weigh the blessings they will throw away against an abstract principle more likely to be effected by union than by secession, they would pause before they would perpetrate this act of suicide on themselves, and of treason against the hopes of the world. To yourself, as the faithful advocate of the Union, I tender the offering of my high esteem and respect.

THOS. JEFFERSON.